

**To:** Benjamin Delisle [DelisleB@jcnj.org]  
**Cc:** []  
**Bcc:** []  
**From:** CN=Dave Kluesner/OU=R2/O=USEPA/C=US  
**Sent:** Wed 5/9/2012 3:27:00 PM  
**Subject:** RE: NY Times: Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise  
<http://www.epa.gov/region2>  
<http://blog.epa.gov/greeningtheapple/>  
[DelisleB@jcnj.org](mailto:DelisleB@jcnj.org)  
<mailto:Kluesner.Dave@epamail.epa.gov>  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/sports/former-new-jersey-landfill-is-now-a-rowing-paradise.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/sports/former-new-jersey-landfill-is-now-a-rowing-paradise.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1)  
JULIET MACUR  
Hotspot  
new park  
Teaneck High School's rowing team  
1964 Olympic rowing trials  
41-year-old real estate executive  
Leonia High  
Fairleigh Dickinson University  
Hackensack Riverkeeper  
North Jersey Championship Regatta  
<http://www.epa.gov/region2>  
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The EPA will hold two public meetings on May 9 to discuss the planned cleanup actions and the results of recent sampling efforts in Riverside Park and the adjacent mud flats. The public meetings will be held from 3 PM to 5 PM and again from 7 PM to 9 PM in the court room of Lyndhurst Town Hall located at 367 Valleybrook Avenue. Presentations at 3:30 and 7:30.

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**From:** Benjamin Delisle <DelisleB@jcnj.org>  
**To:** Dave Kluesner/R2/USEPA/US@EPA  
**Date:** 05/09/2012 11:17 AM  
**Subject:** RE: NY Times: Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise

I forgot about those, can you send me the schedule again? I have tomorrow night's meeting on my calendar.

From: Dave Kluesner [mailto:Kluesner.Dave@epamail.epa.gov]  
Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 11:16 AM  
To: Benjamin Delisle  
Subject: RE: NY Times: Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise

I agree. Will we see you today at either of the public sessions in Lyndhurst? If not, hope to see you tomorrow.

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From: Benjamin Delisle <DelisleB@icnj.org>  
To: Dave Kluesner/R2/USEPA/US@EPA  
Date: 05/09/2012 11:14 AM  
Subject: RE: NY Times: Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise

Thanks. Saw the article yesterday. it caused a bit of a stir among our membership and that upriver at Nereid. People are pretty upset that it cast such a bad light on the river. It might not be much but it is what we have. The article should have mentioned all of hardwork that has gone into cleaning up the river and the vast improvement in the river from the past.

From: Dave Kluesner [mailto:Kluesner.Dave@epamail.epa.gov]  
Sent: Wednesday, May 09, 2012 10:20 AM  
Subject: NY Times: Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/sports/former-new-jersey-landfill-is-now-a-rowing-paradise.html?\\_r=1&pagewanted=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/sports/former-new-jersey-landfill-is-now-a-rowing-paradise.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1)  
Once an Urban Landfill, Now a Rowing Paradise  
By JULIET MACUR  
Published: May 7, 2012

Marcus Yam for The New York Times

Rowers at Overpeck find a course unaffected by tides and free of debris like wood chunks and dead animals.

LEONIA, N.J. — Near the junction of the New Jersey Turnpike and Interstate 80, not far from the conga line of traffic grinding toward New York City, lies a body of water that was once a garbage dump. It was a murky soup of reeking refuse, home to a flotilla of plastic bottles, tires and even refrigerators. The land around it was good for only two things, some longtime residents say, and that was illegal dumping and trapping muskrat.

But after a recent renaissance, that body of water, Overpeck Creek, and the new park abutting it have become a destination for a much more refined hobby. The creek, nearly all 134 acres of it in the upper region of the Meadowlands, has become the newest hot spot for rowing in the New York metropolitan area.

It does not have a boathouse. Nor does it have a secure place to keep boats or oars. But some crews are

willing to overlook that.

"They did dead-body checks pretty frequently where we used to row," said Sarah Fisher, a senior captain of Teaneck High School's rowing team, one of three squads that officially train on Overpeck. "So I guess you could say it's a lot cleaner and a lot prettier here."

Rowing in and around Manhattan was once popular and easy. In the late 1800s, boathouses dotted the banks of the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, and regattas drew throngs of spectators dressed in their Sunday best. Fans hobnobbed while crews battled one another on the water.

Now, though, rowing in New York is uncommon. Only a handful of boat clubs remain in or close to the city. And those clubs must deal with the downsides of being based in an urban area with water affected by the tides.

Most row on water that is never still because of strong currents, making it difficult to steer boats, avoid obstacles and row against the tide. Holding races on tidal water is challenging because swirling, unpredictable currents may give one crew an advantage.

Although the 1964 Olympic rowing trials were held on the Orchard Beach Lagoon in Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, that stretch of water has drawbacks. Boats are sometimes moored on the course. And low tide reveals sandbars and rocks that could damage a rower's delicate shell and tear off the fin that helps stabilize it in the water.

Some crews must also deal with boat traffic. In 2005, a 41-year-old real estate executive was killed on the Harlem River, which flows along the northeastern shore of Manhattan, when his four-man boat collided with a motorboat.

Overpeck has none of those problems. Rowing teams at Teaneck High, Leonia High and Fairleigh Dickinson University now call it home. The men's teams at Columbia University have also occasionally made the short trip across the Hudson this season to row on Overpeck.

"I think the sport will become much more popular in this part of New Jersey because we can just walk to practice from school," said Emily McCartney-Leap, a sophomore on Leonia's team.

The Leonia team is a year old, and Teaneck's has been around since 2002. The die-hard rowers at Teaneck used to travel about 13 miles to Lyndhurst, N.J., to row on the Passaic River before moving here in 2010, when this new section of Overpeck County Park opened.

For decades, the landfill that is now parkland leached toxic substances into the creek before Bergen County spent at least seven years and \$100 million to revive the area.

Clemens Reinke, the rowing coach at Teaneck, Leonia and Fairleigh Dickinson, knew that Overpeck Creek was a rower's dream from the moment he saw it two years ago. It stretches about 4,000 meters — roughly two and a half miles, twice the length of an Olympic course — and has no current because the creek was dammed from the Hackensack River years ago.

The banks are also high, providing a perfect perch for spectators — a rarity, because viewing areas at most races provide only a snippet of an event.

"Yep, we're standing on garbage," Reinke said recently as he stood along the Overpeck, which has been capped on only one side to control seepage from the landfill. "But this is heaven for us. And, of course, it's much, much better than the alternative."

Although garbage still occasionally pops out of the uncapped ground on one side of the creek, the water is much better than the Passaic River for rowing, Reinke said.

On the Passaic, rowers glide in their boats along an old commercial route lined with concrete walls. The river bends, making it difficult for a coach to keep an eye on his squad and ensure its safety. Bridges, barges and floating objects like chunks of wood also make navigating the river especially dangerous for rowers because they are in light, thin-skinned shells.

The water quality on the Passaic, though, can be far more distressing. Oars disappear into a caldron of darkness below the river's surface. The state Department of Environmental Protection has called the Passaic "one of the most toxic waterways in the world."

Teaneck's Fisher said she dreaded being splashed with Passaic River water and would try not to gag if it hit her mouth.

"If it went into your ear, it was pretty gross, too," she said. "You just hoped you weren't going to need antibiotics."

Overpeck Creek, a tributary of the Hackensack River, does not rival mountain spring water in its purity, but it is much cleaner than the Passaic, said Bill Sheehan, the founder of Hackensack Riverkeeper, an advocate for the river. He said Overpeck's water had improved markedly since the park project began in 2002.

Sheehan added that sewage overflow into the Passaic was common. "If you swallow the water, you're definitely going to come down with something, maybe dysentery," he said. That is not the case with the Overpeck.

Like many waterways in the New York City area, the Passaic floods with flotsam from sewer overflows when it rains. From their seats just inches above the water, rowers have a close-up view of floating objects like condoms, tampon applicators and dead, bloated animals.

A Teaneck crew co-captain, Ben Manahan, said that garbage was often a huge distraction.

"At Overpeck, you actually can think about rowing, not the gross things you're rowing on," he said.

Last month, Columbia's men's teams held home races on the creek's calm water for the first time. The same day, the inaugural North Jersey Championship Regatta was held at Overpeck, drawing 438 rowers from 14 schools that usually race in Philadelphia's scholastic league.

And, just like that, Overpeck became an oasis of rowing. The traffic noise that hummed in the distance did not even detract from it.

As the Teaneck High rower Mark Pastoral said, "I've convinced myself that it sounds just like the wind."

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